The Mimetic Dimension

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THE MIMETIC DIMENSION:

LITERATURE BETWEEN NEUROSCIENCE AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

In the experience of literary reading, we may become immersed in what feels like a fictional or imaginary 'world,' assisted only by the linguistic code of a text (or its performance) and our readerly (or dramatic) imagination.[1] Current discussions in the philosophy of literature describe this as the experience of immersion—the phenomenon of getting absorbed in, involved with, or drawn into the world of a story, or the sense of being imaginatively transported into such fictional worlds.[2] How this immersion is understood bears upon the way that fictional world is described in relation to reality. The notion of mimesis is the classical term to describe the relationship between literature and reality. Through mimesis, we become involved in a fictional situation by dramatic pretence (as in staged works) or, as we will be the cased discussed here, by literary imagining (as in the evocation of experiences through reading a novel). Mimesis, moreover, has emerged in contemporary theories of literature, from neuroscientifically-based accounts to phenomenological discussions of literary imagination. A further differentiation in the concept of mimesis is needed both in order to describe the immersive effects of literary experience, and in order to assess the relevance of contemporary theories that aim to account for them. I will call this further differentiation within mimesis the 'mimetic dimension.'

The notion of the mimetic dimension will be elaborated, in the first part of this essay, by distinguishing three possible levels of the representational relation to reality. These include the representation or 'copying' of reality (of what is actual); the revealing representation of reality in a broader sense (including the representation of what is possible); and the constitution of an imagined, fictional world (or experiential complex of meaning) which cannot be explained entirely in terms of its comparison to reality, even as an ideal, or as Aristotle put it, 'universal' type of that reality (including what is impossible but for the fictional 'world' or realm in which it occurs). Literary immersion can be understood in light of this third dimension of mimesis, as the constitution of a literary 'world.'[3] Such constitution is particularly current in phenomenological accounts of literature, to be discussed in the second part of this essay. This differentiation within the concept of mimesis is needed to assess its relevance for current discussions of literary experience, including claims that neuroscience has furnished evidence for the mimetic basis of literature, as I will undertake in the third section.

My overall claim is that the mimetic dimension and its specification helps us to account for literary experience and how it functions. When theorists claim to explain the origins or operations of literary mimesis by pointing to empirical sources, as in current debates, we need to be able to say to what dimension of mimesis their findings might be relevant, and what levels of mimesis may elude such explanation. While neuroscientifically-based theories of literature may offer clues that help explain some aspect of the first mimetic dimension, we need more experiential accounts, such as in phenomenology, to address more complex mimetic dimensionality. Mimesis in its most robust sense—involving multiple dimensions in a complex literary work—cannot be accounted for by neuro-scientific or other empirically-based theories, I will argue, because it is precisely the transcendence of the empirical, or even the creation of an

ideality with counter-realist elements, that literature offers when it is most engaging of the human imagination. Yet such theories do serve to highlight the physiological basis underlying human mimetic capacity, which has been long neglected in literary theory. Empirical science may serve as a corrective to phenomenological accounts which have relied entirely on the notion of an 'implied' or ideal reader, and have not taken into account the real embodied conditions of any imagining. This treatment of neuroscientific and phenomenological accounts of literary mimesis should clarify their place in understanding literary immersion. The more general aim here is to establish the notion of the mimetic dimension as a necessary component of the contemporary philosophy of literature, in particular its understanding of literary imagining and the experience of a literary world.

THE MIMETIC DIMENSION IN LITERATURE

Classical accounts of mimesis (including those by Plato and Aristotle) differentiate among what Aristotle calls 'kinds of mimesis' according to the object (or content), the medium (whether through language, rhythm, music, or painting, for example), and the mode of mimetic representation (whether through narration or dramatic presentation, or both).[4] In his now seminal work *Mimesis* (first published in 1953), Erich Auerbach also introduced a major differentiation in the style of mimetic representation (with a particular emphasis on the difference between the rhetorical tradition, following the style of the Old Testament, and the realist style Auerbach claims begins with Homer).[5] We may further specify the mimetic dimension, not only in order to account for the counter-realist tendencies of some modern literature, but also as essential for understanding the experience of any immersive literary reading.

By 'mimetic dimension' I mean the form of evocation of experience in its reflection of and distinction to reality. The mimetic dimension may allow for three different reflectional levels. These include: 1) a reflection of reality in its actual configuration, which we will call the 'actual dimension'; 2) a reflection of reality in its possible manifestation, which we will call the 'possible dimension'; and 3) a reconfiguration of reality poised beyond its actual configuration or possible manifestation, so that a fictional 'world' takes on an intrinsic significance apart from its comparison to these, which we will call the 'ideal dimension.' Identifying these as dimensions of mimetic representation does not involve claims about the degree of likeness to reality—in its actuality or possible manifestation—that may or may not be achieved in a literary work as it reflects reality through representational means. Fictional literature in which we could become immersed—those works which are sufficiently engaging to absorb our imaginative attention, invite and maintain participation in an imaginary complex of meaning—would have to operate to some extent at all of these levels, and sometimes in elaborately competing ways within the same work.

For literary works in which we can become immersed involve several necessary conditions related to these dimensions. 1) Firstly, literary works in which we can become immersed require certain basic structures of experience borrowed from reality (and with sufficient semblance to reality). The literary work must enable a sufficient degree of coherence in its references (with respect to the organization of space, time, objects, characters, and so on) in order to be imaginable, as well as salient, for the reader. 2) Secondly, such works involve a degree of universalization or possibilization, insofar as they do not refer only to empirical reality, but involve ideal content. Because of its ideal content, literature is able to play with possibilities that exceed any particular configuration of facts. 3) Thirdly, such works in which we may

become immersed can be experienced as imagined 'worlds' we can consider, albeit in a special way, in their own right.

While a work in which we can become immersed is multi-dimensional, the predominance of one dimension or another may characterize certain kinds of literary experience. The actual dimension may predominate, for instance, within the genre of the realist novel.[6] While the style as described by Auerbach concerns 'the realistic portrayal of contemporary reality,' in an author's attempt to capture everyday life as he or she observes it,[7] this first dimensional mode may also be prototypically characterized by the sub-genre within realism, the historical novel. Because the aim of such a work is to capture an historical situation as it really was and potentially even the circumstances, feelings, and thoughts of historical characters as they might really have been, it is dominated by the concern for actuality. Such a work need not be restricted only to recording what Aristotle calls the 'particulars' of actual events—since, on Aristotle's own account, that would make such a work historical, but not a work of literary poeisis. For 'it is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability and necessity.'[8] Within mimesis in the first dimension, the particular plays a dominant role in the literary work, and in our enjoyment and assessment of it. The more we believe a realist historical novel 'captures' the details of a particular circumstance or event or of a particular character, the more it satisfies the reader in having achieved its narrative aim. Within this dimension, a literary work is appreciated in its likeness to, or convincing evocation of, features of actual reality, present or past.

The possible dimension is especially prominent in all fictional situations that are not grounded in the particulars of historical or contemporaneous reality, but rather maximize the role of possibility for imagined characters and events. While fiction as such involves an element of

possibility, we could illustrate an emphasis on this dimension with the genre of tragedy, as Aristotle characterizes it, in terms of what could happen to a character confronted with a certain fate. As much as classical Greek tragedy, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* may serve as an example, for the protagonist, an imaginary rather than historical character, not only suffers his fate as a certain manifestation of human possibility in general, but also suffers from possibility itself as a relentless psychological preoccupation. Shakespeare exploits Hamlet's possible action, and his obsessive deliberation about it, as the psychological substance of the drama. What Hamlet could do in response to the events surrounding his father's death and mother's subsequent marriage to his uncle governs the plot as much as what he does do, insofar as other characters become entangled in his ensuing obsession. When we regard Hamlet's thoughts and actions as 'universal' in Aristotle's sense—according to 'the kinds of things which it suits a certain kind of person to say or do, in terms of probability or necessity'—Hamlet serves as the quintessential subject of a tragic human predicament.[9]

In modernist, absurdist or surrealist fiction, the ideal dimension may be predominately significant. For the represented situation need not conform to reality as it is, or as it could be, but may be governed by an idiosyncratic logic specific to the constructed 'world' of that work. Kafka's fiction is prototypical for this mimetic dimension, in that his stories often defy both reality in its actual configuration, and any probable manifestation of a possible reality. A human being could not overnight transform into an insect (as in Kafka's story 'The Metamorphosis'); an ape could not in five years of training cross evolve to the capacities of an average human being (as in 'A Report to an Academy'). Other deviations in Kafka's works include what we might call the 'impossibilization' of spatial and temporal dimensions, so that they become allegorical rather than situational (corridors that lead one way but not back, courtyards and passageways that

seem to lead interminably to others, time that stretches beyond human limitations). In this way Kafka's fiction deviates from reality, but also constructs an alternative imagined, allegorical world with its own internal necessity. There are different ways in which the deviation from reality may shed light on ordinary experience. Where ordinary reality is shown in striking reconfiguration, deviation from reality may amount to what Victor Shklovsky called the 'defamiliarization' of everyday life. Or, the reader's understanding of the text may be best expressed through its radical difference from any reality it may represent, which Paul Ricoeur once called the 'paradox of iconic augmentation.'[10] The more such a fictional 'world' becomes understood in terms of its own unique reality, the more it may illuminate our own world anew.

Absurdist, Surrealist, Expressionist, and other forms of modernist fiction would then serve as idiomatic of literature governed by the ideal mimetic dimension, in that their rejection of actuality and of likely possibility (or 'probability' as Aristotle refers to it) renders their complexes of meaning explicitly distinct from the world we know through ordinary experience. Yet even in works where this rejection has no place, the literary work may be seen to construct a 'world' of its own. The world as it is need not be rejected in order for it to become absorbed in a complex of meaning that renders its significance largely if not wholly ideal. The place of *Hamlet* in the Western cultural imagination, and the degree of scholarship devoted to understanding it, merits the suggestion that we can consider the 'world' of Shakespeare's drama. Depending upon our literary-theoretical approach, we can regard Hamlet and his world with or without speculating the degree of reflection it allows of the political and psychological circumstances of Shakespeare's time. If we are involved in the ways the text may reflect actual historical realities of its writer or audience, we are primarily concerned with the work in its manifestation of the first or actual mimetic dimension. To the extent that Hamlet as a character

offers a prototype of the Oedipal situation—as he would for Freud—we may refer to the second or possible dimension, to Hamlet as a 'universal.' When we look to Hamlet in his very specificity, as an ideal (rather than actual) particular, with his own psychological 'world,' we regard the work through the lens of the third or ideal dimension.

Mimesis as it has been traditionally understood—from Plato and Aristotle to Auerbach and Walton—needs this further elaboration in order to fully accommodate the richness of literary immersion. For if mimesis is classically defined as a representation of reality—or in Plato more specifically a copy, mimicry, imitation, or (sometimes distorted) reflection of reality—modern literature tends to generate experiences for the reader that strain this description. Modernism's emphasis on the transformative and originating aspect of literary creation leads to claims that literature has the capacity to transcend, rather than only represent, reality as it is,[11] and this has often been taken as a disqualification of the notion of mimesis as such. While the notion that literature may present reality in its possible manifestation (or 'universal' characterization) is familiar since Aristotle's *Poetics*, this may not go far enough to explain the richness of literary experience in mimetic terms.

For we have come to think of literature as constituting unique fictional worlds that, though borrowing heavily from the structures of reality, are in some significant way heterogeneous to it. This constitutional aspect of literary fiction is reflected in theories of literature that evoke the concept of an imagined or literary 'world.' We will have to consider the limits of this notion further, insofar as a literary 'world,' I would argue, is dependent upon the non-literary world, is limited to the specifications of the text and the inferences on the part of the reader the text promotes, and so is underdetermined in comparison to real-worldly experience. Yet in one form or another, the notion of a literary 'world' persists across the philosophy of

literature in the last century. For instance, Nelson Goodman allowed for the 'worldmaking' function of literature among other arts. Whether realistic or defying realism, literature, like art in general, contributes to the 'discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge,' as Goodman argued in *Ways of Worldmaking*.[12] Martin Heidegger referred to the way in which poetic language, as he puts it, 'worlds' (or allows the setting-forth of a situation that grounds human meaning and, in Heidegger's terms, 'reveals' truth).[13] Paul Ricoeur argues that fiction allows us to experience how 'only imagination at work—in a work—could produce a world out of itself.'[14] Kendall Walton referred to the 'fictional worlds' generated by representational make-believe.[15] Literary critic William Gass instructs on 'how to make a world of words.'[16] Lubomir Dolezel has described literature as creating a 'heterocosmos.' Eric Hayot recently criticizes the notion of literary 'worlds' as a particularly Western view of literature, while admitting that the status of the concept of the world in literary criticism today remains 'of rhetorically unmatched prestige.'[17]

Within the classical concept of mimesis, we can understand the evoked world of a fictional or poetic work, at the first or actual dimension, as an *imitation or representation* of the world as we ordinarily experience it. This may involve reception or enactment of a dramatic performance, the cognitive, inwardly perceptual and affective enactment by the reader according to the literary text, or in Walton's view, 'make-believe' by a reader propelled by the literary work. This notion of mimesis is central in accounts of literature from Plato and Aristotle to recent theories of literature, including Auerbach's, and has been revived in the wake of relatively recent discoveries in neuroscience.

Some review of this history may be helpful. Mimesis is characterized by Plato in the *Republic* in varying ways—as mimicking, representation, or copying—and is the foundation of Aristotle's theory of literature. Mimesis considered as copying or reproducing reality is, of

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course, criticized by Socrates in Plato's work. Mimesis is a representation of an object that itself, in Plato's metaphysics, 'resembles real being but is not that,' and is only a 'dim adumbration in comparison with reality.' Therefore for Plato the poetic imitator is a 'producer of the product three removes from nature.'[18] While much discussion of Plato's view of literature (or narrative and dramatic poetry) focuses on the proposed restriction (or censorship) of depicted content, Plato also establishes a case against mimesis as a representative activity as such. In this context, Socrates presents epistemological, psychological, and metaphysical objections to poetic mimesis. In the second, third, and tenth books of the dialogue, Plato distinguishes the objects of mimetic activity (depictions of human and divine actions, for instance, or of physical objects); the media of mimetic activity (in several kinds of poetry, in musical rhythm, in painting, for instance), and what Aristotle will call the 'mode' of mimetic activity. In discussing the mimetic mode, Plato distinguishes between the narration of a tale and the narrator's (or actor's) taking on the perspective of the speaker. Of the latter that Socrates is most critical, because this kind of mimesis involves not only mimicry but, he claims, concealment.[19]

In Plato's work, Socrates, then, is given to express several objections to mimesis. These include the objection that poets and artists lack knowledge of the subject-matter they represent. Mimetic activities are characterized as dangerously stimulating the most 'inferior' part of the soul, 'the part in us that is remote from intelligence.' Mimetic representation is, further, a distortion, offering not 'the imitation of reality as it is' (which is known to the philosopher as one who understands essences) but of 'appearance as it appears.'[20] This metaphysical objection is demonstrated with the example of painting, but it is explicitly aimed at the lack of truth-value (or lack thereof) of literary works.[21]

Yet while Plato in this way offers critical judgment of mimesis, Aristotle argues for the naturalness of mimetic activity. 'For it is an instinct of human beings, from childhood, to engage in mimesis,' Aristotle argues in the *Poetics*, and this mimetic instinct is the origin of poetry.[22] Mimesis is natural to us; it is how we learn; and it is naturally enjoyable to everyone. This notion of mimesis as mimicry and as a natural instinct is echoed in the recent revival of mimesis in neuro-scientific accounts of literature, expounded by Gerhard Lauer and others. Our enjoyment of literature is attributed to a so-called 'imitation instinct' grounded in the mirror neuron mechanism and similar neurological processes, which allows us to neurologically imitate another's actions.[23]

Although the concept has undergone philosophical critique, mimesis as mirroring or copying reality, or in some other way re-presenting it, still prevails in our understanding of literature, particularly when we are attempting to account not primarily for the place of a given work in its cultural history, but for how that work is experienced by the reader. The canonical status in literary studies of Auerbach's notion of mimesis as 'the representation of reality,' along with his affirmation especially of literary works that most closely represent 'unvarnished everyday life,' suggest that mimesis in the more restricted sense, as a mirror or copy of life, remains a part of our cultural understanding of literary imagining.[24] Indeed in Sartre's study *What is Literature?,* unaffected prose writing, with clear and transparent language, is praised for its ability to 'hold a mirror up to reality.' Both Auerbach and Sartre criticize modernist literature—for instance, Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness narrative, Surrealist or Dadaist poetry—they consider endangering such realism.[25] Kafka's fiction, as we have characterized it, would certainly fall prey to this critique. Mimesis in its first or actual dimension, as the imitation or copying of reality, is residual in these accounts of literature; and it

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is the central concept of the current development in neurologically-based aesthetics concerned with what is argued to be the neurological origin of literary imitation.

Yet of course, Aristotle's notion of mimesis is more expansive than Plato's. In his account of tragic poetry, Aristotle allows for what I call the second mimetic dimension, namely, the disclosure of possibility. For Aristotle, mimesis of action and life is the purpose of poetry, but this does not amount merely to mimicking or mirroring reality. For the best and most engaging poetry constructs a plausible yet striking and emotionally affective account of what might happen or might have happened (including, in tragedy, catastrophic events) and thus reaches the level of the 'universal' as described above. Kendall Walton's view of mimetic representation as based on make-believe, where literary representation (in language) would be the prop for imaginative pretence, seems to fit within this mimetic level, though he also grants that 'fictional truths' as the object of such activities, taken together, may constitute a fictional world.

Of course, the first dimension of mimesis (as the re-presentation of reality) remains part of Aristotle's understanding of literature. In his account of imagination in *de Memoria*, Aristotle thinks of images as an impression of sensation, left, he says, in us like a seal leaves its impression in wax. Literary reading, with its visualization and other perceptual and affective simulations, may be considered prototypical of mimesis in this sense, if through reading we would draw up images from memory, in constructing a 're-presentation' of elements of reality as we have perceived it, which provides at least the basis for the coherently imagined world. But this reproduction of images does not yet account for the fact that literary mimesis is representative in a further sense. In the *Poetics* Aristotle recognizes the relationship between images and other forms of mimesis, and states that we enjoy images not only because of their

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particular qualities (such as their perceptual effects) but in the fact that they are representations. That is, we enjoy mimetic images qua representations: that they bear likeness to, but are not, reality.[26] As we know, Aristotle also emphasizes that literature, as it allows for the mimesis of life and action, involves thinking about possibility. So literary mimesis, insofar as it involves imagination in Aristotle's sense, should not only mean the representation of what we have actually seen or known by calling up or presenting images from the past; it cannot involve only mirroring reality as it is or has been (what Aristotle deems 'particulars'), but must involve, with what could be, a contemplation of universals, of what within the possible and the probable could happen. The evocation of experiences through literature would have to have both the appropriate similarity to reality, and so involve some level of reflection or reproduction, and benefit from the further representative status of any imagined content, with cognitive and aesthetic room for further meaning. Representative reference does not need to be subsumed entirely under actuality, but makes room for possibility. Literature, then, has been understood as mimesis in more expansive sense than mere 'imitation' in the sense of reproducing the appearance of actual reality. In terms of the second dimension we can regard its *disclosure or revealing* of reality in its possibility.

We may also find in Aristotle hints that literature can be associated with a third or ideal dimension. In the best dramatic representations, Aristotle argues, all elements of the plot appear to be necessary. This necessity is brought about if 'the component events should be so structured that if any is displaced or removed, the sense of the whole is disturbed and dislocated....'[27] When tragic poetry is able to depict an action that is complete, whole, and of magnitude, Aristotle claims that it has philosophical significance. In light of this, we may relate Aristotle's own notion of mimesis to the ideal mimetic dimension, in that literature may be *constitutive* of a

unique 'world' with its own intrinsic significance. Arguably, Aristotle's description of the necessity that should govern a literary representation is a template for the idea of a 'world'—or the sense of a whole governed by an internal logic within cognizable parameters. It is this whole complex of meaning we can imagine, and in which we may become immersed, when reading. The cathartic effect of tragedy, of course, presumes the possibility of such immersion, since we have to be able to experience pity and fear in imagined circumstances that feel compelling. Aristotle then not only advances beyond Plato's sense of mimesis as representation of reality by invoking the disclosure of possibility, but also hints at the further evolution of mimetic dimensionality. Ricoeur seems to support this suggestion when he claims that Aristotle's account of tragedy allows possibility to be raised to a mythic level.[28] The fact that Aristotle recognizes that poetic arts evolve over time, make it reasonable to suppose that the conceptual distinctions Aristotle offers are themselves susceptible to corresponding development.[29]

In recognizing the constitution of a 'world' as a third, ideal mimetic dimension, we can address its fundamental ambiguity in mimetic terms. For a literary situation in which we might become immersed both relates to reality as we ordinarily know it, and is, qua representation, distinctly different from any world we could ordinarily experience. Dolezel's notion of a 'heterocosmos'—in defining the world of the literary work as other to that of reality—rightly emphasizes the difference between literature and life. Ricoeur also emphasizes the idea that this 'new reality' of the fictional work is wholly imaginary, and like a utopia it exists, he claims, 'nowhere.'[30] Yet the notion of a heterocosmos or of utopic fiction denies a fundamental ambiguity inherent in literature which belongs to the ideal mimetic dimension. By rejecting mimesis, Dolozel obscures the dependence of the imagined world on ordinary experience.

While we can say that while in some considerable ways the Dostoevsky's presentation of an imagined world in Cri*me and Punishment* is other to reality, it also must be derivative of reality as we ordinarily experience it. The protagonist or anti-hero Raskolnikov, in justifying his murderous plot, compares himself to Napoleon Bonaparte, and that figure is both extrinsic to Dostoevsky's world and made an ideal figure within it. At the same time, the world of the novel is unlike any real-worldly situation. The reader, in engaging with the novel, participates receptively in a world gradually constructed and stylized in a particular way through Dostoevsky's language, images, narrative tone and rhythm, and so forth. The philosophical reflection on the human condition that emerges with the narration is made possible by the framing of the story within a tragic structure. The place of this novel is both St. Petersburg, with what was regarded by the author of *Notes from Underground* as its inhumane, artificial urbanity; yet it is also distinct from any real St. Petersburg. We would not, for instance, criticize the author for not having named more of its streets, or for placing one building too close or too far from another. In a similar way, the plot unfolds in a particular year in the 19th century and, at another level, constructs its own represented era—that of modernity reflected through a critical lens. The course of days and seasons and the cultural calendar provide temporal references, but again we do not expect that the schedule of events within the novel confirm to time as it ordinarily unfolds. The narrator is free to skip from present to past or future, and offers a chronological selection that is not available to us in ordinary life.

Specific to the literary constitution of this world is, further, the capacity of the narrator (through 'free indirect speech' and other narrative techniques) to relate the inner feelings of the characters. It has been pointed out that only in fiction can a third person perspective magically merge with, and report on, the inner life of other minds.[31] This narrative capacity (a mimetic

mode to which Plato would have objected as a form of concealing mimicry on the part of the author, as he objected to the mixture of narration with direct speech by characters), is part of the structure of this fictional world, and contributes to its unique ontological status. While the 'world' of Dostoevsky's novel borrows heavily from reality—and so from the empirical and cultural calculus of inferences performed continually by the reader—it cannot be judged according to that likeness.

We have thus far seen that the mimetic dimension of a literary work may be described in terms of three levels. In the first or actual dimension, there is the representation of reality in its actual or 'particular' configuration. In the second or possible dimension, there is the manifestation of possibility or, of reality the level of the 'universal.' The third or ideal dimension is the constitution of a unique stratum of imagined being that, though borrowing from the world of ordinary experience, is irreducible to it. It is at this third level that literary mimesis offers the richest possibility for immersion.

PHENOMENOLOGY, LITERARY WORLDS, AND THE 'PRODUCTIVE IMAGINATION'

Similar to Goodman's notion of 'worldmaking,' in which art is understood to create new complexes of meaning, phenomenologically-oriented accounts of literature focus on the capacity of literature for disclosure of possibility and constitution of a unique dimension of experience. In distinction to Goodman, however, phenomenology is concerned not with the symbolic function of a fictional world, but rather with how it is *experienced* as a world modified, and so distinct from, reality. While Paul Ricoeur offers an account of the productive imagination as relevant to the world-constituting function of fiction, Wolfgang Iser, developing Roman Ingarden's

phenomenology of reading, has explicitly described the relationship between reality and the imaginary in works of fiction, relating this to the anthropological function of literature.

Because they are focused on how literature is experienced by the reader, these phenomenological accounts may contribute to an understanding of the third mimetic dimension. In my own work, too, I have demonstrated the common threads in the relationship to everyday experience in both literature and phenomenology, particularly as these allow for stepping outside of (or an 'ecstatic' relationship to) reality.[32] In this way, literary works of art have both been able to reflect the actual or particular elements of life as we experience it, and, by means of imaginative variation, bring into our attentive focus the very structure of that experience. Mimesis can be related to this imaginative variation in that, as Paul Ricoeur argues, 'mimesis is not simply reduplication but creative reconstruction' of our experience of reality.[33] In the previous section I have argued that we should not, like Ricoeur and Dolezel, overstate the autochthony and autonomy of this world—since it borrows from reality in its variations on that reality. Yet in the constituted 'world' of the literary work, the enactment of perceptual, affective, and cognitive experiences promoted by the text is facilitated through reading, and in the most immersive experiences, generates a complex whole with aesthetic or poetic specificity.

Literary constitution, generating the third or ideal mimetic dimension, involves the fact that something new is created in literary experience that cannot be reduced to a sum of non-literary experiences, however recombined. Inevitably this implies that the imagination involved in literary experience does not merely reproduce reality as it is, or even merely service speculation on possible configurations, but produces something new—or produces, at least, a reconfiguration of reality that obtains a new claim to significance. The conceptual history of imagination is notoriously convoluted,[34] but we may be able to identify some aspect of

imagination that will help to account for literary immersion. There may be a common thread that runs through significant formulations within this history, insofar as imagination has been affiliated with some kind of mimetic capacity. Adapting Kant's distinction, we can say that reproductive imagination is the cognitive operation of mimesis in the sense of representation of reality; productive imagination, on the other hand, would have to be associated with mimesis in its further dimensions.

Imagination has been traditionally described as a faculty that brings forth images—Aristotle identifies *phantasia* as 'that in virtue of which an image (phantasma) occurs in us' in the absence of perception.[35] This occurrence involves re-presenting, and sometimes recombining or refashioning, objects of sense experience as maintained in memory. Kant echoes Aristotle's view when he claims, in *Critique of Judgment*, that imagination, through art, creates a 'second nature from material supplied by actual nature' or, as he also describes it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the imagination is a power to bring to mind objects in their absence.[36] In this sense, the imagination can be thought of as reproductive, as mimetic in the first dimension.

But Kant also acknowledges the power of imagination, what Kant calls the 'productive imagination,' in the formal shaping of experience, and its significant role in aesthetic experience. We can think of the positing of counter-factual ideas in terms of this productivity, in entertaining possibilities beyond the actual.[37] Ricoeur adapts the notion of productive imagination to understand fiction in the broadest sense, including literature, myths, and political utopias. Insofar as the fictional or poetic world draws heavily from, but does not merely reproduce, our experience of the perceived world, literature demands a productive involvement of the imagination that goes beyond the reproduction of reality. The world is not merely there before us to be experienced, but is also subject to our modifying intervention.

In using the term 'imagination' here, we should not be restricted to an essentially Cartesian view of the imagination as mental image-making, where there is an object, an image, somehow inhering within the mind. Even literary 'images' need not be associated with the fallacy of mental inherence or immanence. With a phenomenological orientation, Jean-Paul Sartre's study in *The Imaginary* (*L'imaginaire*) treats images not as objects in the mind, but rather as modes of consciousness through which a non-present object is intended.[38] In this way, Sartre overcomes the idea that the image merely copies the object into mental imagery.[39] More recently, Antonio Damasio describes images not as objects in the mind, but as neurological or mental patterns. Because he admits a distinction between these physiological events and the experience we have when imagining,[40] a biological explanation of images as neural patterns may be compatible with the phenomenological account of images as experienced phenomena. Finally, we can draw from Elaine Scarry's notion of 'perceptual mimesis': literary reading may bring forth imaginings that are more like simulations of perceptions rather than simulations of the appearances of things. Since the notion of 'simulation' is itself problematic (and may not accurately describe readerly experience), I would prefer to describe such mimesis as perceptually as well as cognitively 'evocative.' This is also distinct from Walton's understanding of mimesis as founded in make-believe, where the literary work, or rather its language, serves as a prop for the reader's pretence. While we can pretend to be a particular character, to do certain actions, and to see or hear particular objects, the experience of a work's worldliness has to be evoked through a complex of perceptual and cognitive inferences, where the texture, structure, and value of that world is not agent-directed. There are those experiences, those perceptions and objects, the whole surrounding 'world' which have to be evoked. One does not 'pretend' a world but experiences its evocation in an imaginative mode.

Mimetic evocation need not produce an imagistic copy of some object or other in the world, nor simulate its perception, but may provoke the reader's imaginative construction of an complex by provoking various perceptual or cognitive operations involved in experience. This can be expanded to allow for the idea that in reading, much of the experiential content of a work is brought about not only by visual imagery, but by evocations of other forms of sense and cognitive experience. These may include tactile, kinesic, olfactory, and aural evocations, in addition to cognitive inferences. While William Gass may go too far in his claim that literature does not deal in images at all, but rather in constructed ideas, the form of literary imagining need not be solely or even dominantly imagistic.[41]

While Sartre's account of the image as a mode of consciousness overcomes the fallacy of immanence, its more radical ontological claim warrants scrutiny. Sartre claims that objects are 'annihilated' or 'negated' by being experienced *as* an image, in the mode of what Sartre calls 'nothingness.' Mimesis qua representation, even if only as a mode of consciousness, already problematizes reality, for Sartre, and it is this capacity to problematize reality that somehow frees us from its domination. That Sartre may exaggerate 'the function of absence and negativity' in imagistic representation in order to highlight the capacity of freedom has been criticized.[42] But Sartre also understands imagining through literature as mimetically disclosive, as he argues in *What is Literature?*. When its language is transparent enough, as in the case of prose, literature holds a mirror up to reality in order to disclose it.[43] Neither Sartre's view of the negative work of the image, nor his admittance of how the imaginary may disclose the real, allows for something like literary constitution. We cannot rely on Sartre's phenomenology here, for constitution suggests moving beyond the negating or disclosing relation to the real.

Yet with Sartre's critique in mind—highlighting the problematic status of any claim to an immanent image in the mind that copies reality—we may yet find resources in traditional accounts of imagination. Constitution of a unique fictive world and disclosure of ordinary reality need not be mutually exclusive, since it is in contrast to another view of things that aspects of the *status quo* may first be noticed. Aristotle and Kant, in their respective terminology, seem to have recognized the significance of productive imagination in an aesthetic-literary context. While Aristotle treats *phantasia* as the image-bringing capacity that is largely reproductive, Aristotle's *Poetics*, as we have seen, describes how the structure of incidents and other elements of dramatic poetry allow for the presentation of possibility, of what *could* happen, and we have suggested that this hints even at the third or ideal dimension of literary constitution. In any case, Aristotle clearly recognizes the productive nature of literary mimesis. Kant distinguishes between the reproductive imagination and the productive imagination, and relies on the notion that in aesthetic experience, imagination is not subordinate to understanding, but is active in 'free play.' In his writings and lectures on imagination, fiction, and metaphor, Ricoeur helpfully, if somewhat loosely, adopts Kant's notion of the 'productive imagination' to account for the creation of fictions—in myth, utopias, and literary works, for instance—which exceed the real in this way.[44] Literary works do not merely reproduce reality, but, as Ricoeur writes, 'they may produce a new reality… not bound by an original that precedes them.'[45]

For Ricoeur the transformation of the given, for instance through fiction, takes place by means of disclosure 'of reality that is both available and yet to come.'[46] But how does this transformation occur? In theorizing imagination, Ricoeur hopes to unfold the 'logic of discovery' in human creativity and so explain this transformation. Yet Ricoeur claims that there remains a blind spot, or a 'kernel of opacity' in the transposition of the imaginary that cannot be

analyzed.[47] Despite this opacity, there are some indications in Ricoeur's extensive treatment of metaphor. Metaphor involves the capacity 'to see the same in spite of, and through, the different' and is an act of imagination that reshapes reality.[48] Ricoeur defines imagination as 'this ability to produce new kinds of assimilation and to produce them not *above* the differences, as in the concept, but in spite of and through the differences.'[49] In metaphor, a new kind of resemblance is created that both absorbs and maintains difference. Through metaphor, among other ways, the creative imagination involves a 'demand put to conceptual thought… to *think more.*'[50] Readers of Kant's aesthetics will recognize that in this treatment of metaphor Ricoeur echoes Kant's notion of aesthetic ideas.[51] Metaphor, according to Ricoeur, helps us to overcome the prejudice that 'the real is [only] the given, such as it can be empirically observed and scientifically described.'[52]

While this account of metaphor may not be sufficient to illuminate the workings of productive imagination, Ricoeur's account can be included in a study of literary mimesis that overcomes the limits of Sartre's view of negation, and his opposition between disclosure and constitution. From this point of view, the imaginary nature of literature is neither wholly negative (since it is nothing in relation to actuality), nor merely disclosive of the actual, but posits some creatively imagined possibility in contradistinction to the given. Sartre, in fact, approaches this idea when in his interpretations of literary works (by Flaubert, Saint-Genet, and others) he refers to the 'possibilization of the real' (however that may contrast with his emphasis on negation and annihilation in *L'imaginaire*). The relationship between possibility and reality, or between the fictional and the real, requires explanation. If fiction allows us to entertain other realities, its other-worldliness, as I have argued, is not absolutely other, for it borrows the schematic foundation from which the imagination must draw from the world of non-fictive

experience, and must maintain enough coherence within the terms of reality to be meaningful at all.

This relationship may be explained in literary critical terms in the later work of Wolfgang Iser, which, however, suffers from an ungrounded view of what he calls the 'imaginary.' Iser's earlier work, *The Act of Reading* (*Der Akt des Lesens*) focused on the response-inviting structures of the literary text as a potential of response (*Wirkungspotential*) and, in *The Implied Reader* (*Der implizierte Leser*) on the reader understood not as any empirical reader but as the ideal embodiment of 'the entirety of preorientations which a fictional text offers to its possible readers as conditions for a response.'[53] In *The Fictive and the Imaginary (Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre),* Iser aims to define literature, specifically fiction, anthropologically, and so to answer the question why we need and enjoy fiction. It will be precisely on this question that the phenomenologically-oriented account of literary imagining will meet and contrast with neuroasethetic accounts, to be discussed in the next section.

In *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, Iser argues that literature enables us not merely to disclose reality but to transcend it through imaginary possibilization, which amounts to the constitution of a new stratum of being. The literary imagination involves a transcendence of existing frameworks of experience and, according to Iser, reflects the dynamism of creative generation. Iser's explanation of this, however, problematically decentralizes the subject or agent of imagining. In constituting fictional worlds, the imagination, he claims, engages what he calls 'the imaginary,' literature gives rise to hermeneutic excess, experienced as the irreducibility of literary works to a singular interpretation. While I would attribute this irreducibility to the ideal particularity of the third dimension as I have explained it above, this excess is expressed in Iser's account of 'the imaginary' (*das Imaginäre*) as the ever-shifting

cultural repository from which fictions are formed. The notion of 'the imaginary' seems to be Iser's attempt to identify the productive 'kernel of opacity' in literary creation.

Iser's account is intended to overcome the opposition between the real and fiction, and in this context Iser posits the imaginary as a 'third element.' 'The literary text is a mixture of reality and fictions, and as such it brings about an interaction between the given and the imagined.' This echoes Sartre's view that language is an interface between the imaginary and the real. Their play allows for constitution as we have described it above, or as Iser puts it, 'the emergence of other worlds.' For Iser the fictional works as a medium through which the imaginary emerges, while the imaginary exists without partaking of the character of reality. Fictionalizing gives form to the imaginary just as it converts the reality represented into a sign that points beyond, allowing us to 'conceive what it is toward which the sign points.' Realities transposed into the text become signs for something else, 'are made to outstrip their original determinacy.' Reality as adopted into the text becomes less determined as the imaginary becomes more determined. Fictionalizing, as distinct from fantasy or mere daydreaming, is 'a guided act' that 'endows the imaginary with an articulate gestalt.'[54]

In fiction, the diffuse quality of reality becomes the precise quality of a represented reality, and so the imaginary takes on a determinate quality that makes it closer to reality as such, since 'determinacy is a minimum definition of reality.'[55] In the fictionalizing process, reproduced reality is made to point to a 'reality' beyond itself, while, Iser explains, the imaginary is lured into form. In each case there is a crossing of boundaries: the determinacy of reality is exceeded at the same time that the diffusiveness of the imaginary is guided and shaped. Consequently, extra-textual reality merges into the imaginary, and the imaginary merges into reality. The fictionalizing act:

…leads the real to the imaginary and the imaginary to the real, and it thus conditions the extent to which a given world is to be transcoded, a non-given world is to be conceived, and the reshuffled worlds are to be made accessible to the reader's experience.[56]

During the experience of literary reading, we take this non-given world as if it were real. The self-disclosure of fiction—the means by which fictions, through generic conventions, announce themselves as fictional—'turns the whole of the world organized in the text into an 'as-if' construction,' so that we suspend natural attitudes adopted toward the 'real' world and intend the 'represented' (or imaginarily constituted) world. The attention of fictive reading requires a bracketing of reality such that 'the reality represented in the text is not meant to represent reality; it is a pointer to something that is not' and has no real existence. 'The world occurring in the fictional text is judged as if it were a reality, but the comparison is only implicit—what is in the text is linked with something it is not.'[57] This is how Iser attempts to explain fiction as more than a copy or even disclosure of the real, but as constitutive of a dimension of experience that must be imagined. This is comparable to Ricoeur's view that fiction can 'create a *redescription* of reality.' Such is the 'positive function of fiction, of which the *epoché* is the negative condition.'[58] Here Ricoeur refers to the phenomenological method of bracketing (or putting into abeyance our exclusive belief in) reality as it ordinarily appears. Insofar as literary experiences are brought to life in reading, the ordinary world (and its legitimate claim to ground meaning) is not negated, but shifted out of focus. For the time of literary immersion, the text and the experiences it invites and maintains for the reader are allowed to generate a complex of meaning that usurps the pull of the ordinary world.

Iser's account has the advantage in helping to explain how immersion in an imagined world shifts the balance of our regard for reality, as Plato recognized when he argued that if

citizens of the polis are to imitate through literary and dramatic works, says Socrates, they should 'imitate what is appropriate to them' rather than unbecoming actions, 'lest from the imitation they imbibe the reality.'[59] Cervantes offers an illustration of this process with his character Don Quixote. Don Quixote is enchanted by the reading of chivalric novels to the point where he has come to regard himself as a knight, a crude peasant lass as a lady, and windmills as giants disguised to look like windmills. Cervantes's character is locked in his own 'world' in the third-dimensional or ideal sense. He also loses sight of its representational nature, and so loses the contrast with reality as it is. The result is, of course, delusion, which is explained in the more real-worldly terms of the novel itself as a kind of illness. The reader, however, not being so deluded, can situate the fantastical world of Don Quixote's imaginings (dominated by the third ideal dimension) within the more second-worldly dimension of the novel within which such delusion occurs and is contrasted with the more sober perspective of the narrator. The romantic nostalgia and inter-textual genius of Cervantes's work arises from the complexity of the mimetic dimension and a contrast among its different manifestations in the novel.

The considerable modification of the mind that afflicts Don Quixote is unlikely to occur to the ordinary reader, but even the most sober or casual reading of fiction requires a modification of ordinary intentionality that puts the ordinary world and its claims momentarily aside. In reading fiction, we do not 'annihilate' the world as Sartre may have us believe, but we have to regard the imagined world with an intention that correspondingly suspends the power of the reality of the given world from which our intention is diverted. What we learn from any kind of fiction, but particularly from works with maximal formal organization and compelling content, is that the given world is not the only source of experience, of appearances, of 'world.'

Through imagination we may generate complexes of meaning that compete with reality, if not for our legitimation, then for our absorptive attention.

Similarly, the plight of Anna Karenina, a character so often cited as an object of readerly empathy in philosophical and neuro-aesthetic scholarship on literature, is prefigured in Tolstoy's novel by her literary imaginings. Karenina is depicted immersed an English novel, so absorbed that she feels as the characters feel, feels shame when they feel shame. The narrator tells us that she 'wants to live as they live.' The reader's empathy for Karenina is not only due to his or her ability to pretend that she is real, or to pretend that we feel her feelings. The reader is also affected by the ways in which the narrative recognizes her capacity for immersion: just as she is absorbed in her imaginings and fantasies, we too, are absorbed in Tolstoy's work. The reader is subject to precisely the same kinds of imaginary wanderings and identifications as is the object of empathy, and experiences the reflected levels of imaginative immersion.

These characters illustrate something about the nature of fictional imagining as such. Don Quixote and Anna Karenina illustrate the circumstance that taking the imaginary as if it were real necessarily modifies the sense of reality with which we ordinarily endow the given. The imagination crosses a boundary between reality and a fictional elsewhere and reality is thereby experienced as overstepped. Iser puts it this way:

> Fictionalizing opens up a horizon of possibilities in relation to what is; to this extent it remains linked to realities. But while realities are concrete, the possibilities remain abstract, for they result from boundary-crossing and thus cannot be fashioned by what they have exceeded. The horizon of possibilities adumbrated by boundary-crossing inevitably modifies the reality that has been overstepped.[60]

In Don Quixote's experience, the fictional world of chivalry has become so fixed in his imagination as to blur the boundary between the fictional and the real. When Don Quixote looks at reality, he sees it through the lens of his fictional imagining. In this case, the imaginative constitution of a fictional world shuts down the capacity of revealing truths about the ordinary world. Yet the collapse of levels of reflection for the protagonist works to expose, for the reader, the complexity of novelistic imagination. In the case of Anna Karenina's reading, the horizon of possibilities that lies beyond her own life is made determinate through the characters of her English novel. When she indulges in their feelings, in their shame, the life she lives within her own marriage to Karenin has been relativized, for it is not the only possible source of experience. Thus feeding her own fantasizing, she is all the more vulnerable to Count Vronsky's allure. Yet literature may also strengthen our resolve with respect to the pressures of reality. A reader of *Don Quixote de la Mancha* or of *Anna Karenina* might more clearly recognize the risks of romantic illusion.

It is thus that we can describe the process of constitution by which the literary work also, by contradistinction, may disclose the real. As constitutive and disclosive, literature can no longer be restricted to mimesis in the first or actual dimension. Yet we also have to go beyond Iser's account. For while he adequately addresses the constitutive and revealing status of the fictional world, he does not account for the experiential (including cognitive and perceptual-evocative) processes which make this happen. In *The Fictive and the Imaginary* Iser explicitly divorces the 'imaginary' from the intentionality of a reader. The imaginary is no longer to be understood (as in Iser's earlier work) to belong to the processes of reading (or even fictionalizing) but is attributed to some restless excess of human cultural forms. If it is not rooted in intentional consciousness, it has been asked, what exactly is the imaginary?[61] Does the

imaginary exist 'before' or outside of fictive acts, in order that the fictive has an object to which to give form? If the fictive acts give form to the imaginary, whose acts are they? They cannot be said to originate with the reader, but the author is scarcely mentioned in Iser's account.[62] Even if we supplied to his account the reader Iser elaborated in his earlier work, this reader is deliberately a disembodied one, because it is an ideal, not a real, totality of preorientations.[63] While phenomenological accounts of literature—drawing from Iser and Ricoeur in particular— have been able to shed light on the constitutive nature of literary imagining, and so on the third or ideal mimetic dimension, it has neglected the ways in which the readerly experience remains grounded in embodiment. The necessity of accounting for a real embodied reader becomes more apparent in light of neuro-aesthetic approaches to literature, to which we will now turn.

MIMESIS BETWEEN NEUROSCIENCE AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Recent claims by literary theorists working with neuro-scientific findings aim to support mimetic theory at the neurological level. The most relevant findings concern the discovery of what has been called the 'Mirror Neuron Mechanism' (MNM) and related neurological processes, first in monkeys, and more recently in humans. Drawing on the idea of the MNM, scientists have claimed to locate the physiological basis for human mimetic capacity. In conjunction with these scientists, literary theorists have extended this claim to account for literary mimesis in a broad sense. The origins of our capacity to mimic, and so to represent reality, as well as to feel empathy, have been assigned to these neurological processes.

It had been long known that monkeys are capable of imitating, and that this seems to be innate as mimicry of facial gestures has been observed in newborn monkeys. The discovery of

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the mirror neuron mechanism in macaque monkeys in the early 1990's showed that at the neurological level, the observation of an action by another provoked the same neural firing as the execution of that action.[64] The study of monkeys showed 'an internal, physiological, mimetic tracing of another's experience' in the brain, and this was named 'mirror neuron' activity in a 1996 article in the journal *Brain*.[65] Since then, the same mirror neuron mechanism has been observed in human brain activity. In 2010 single-cell studies directly showed mirror neuron activity in human surgical patients undergoing treatment for epilepsy.[66] It has also been established that the Mirror Neuron Mechanism is active not only in observing an action, but in talking about or indeed reading about an action, and so has been linked to literary imagination.[67] On this basis, the literary scholar Gerhard Lauer claims, in his widely discussed essay 'Spiegelneuronen' (2007), that motor neuron activity is the root of our 'imitation instinct,' and the basis for literature as such.[68] The activity of mirror neurons in reading has since been demonstrated.[69]

The evolutionary purpose of literature, Lauer claims, is to feed this imitation instinct. The evidence of neurological activity is extended to social empathy, via imitation and what is known as 'contagion.' This, along with other neuroscientific themes such as canonical neurons[70] (which prefigure motoric action according to the perception of objects in space, differing where there is, for instance, a handle, or the object is instrumental as a pencil, etc.), have led to suggestions of a 'basic need for a new paradigm of representation and human mimeticism in the biological and philosophical dialogues of the new millennium.'[71] With the help of neuroscience, an emerging group of theorists believe themselves to have found the origin of the work of art, in empirical sources.

Other theorists, however, have challenged the applicability of these neuroscientific ideas to the study of literature.[72] Massimo Salgaro summarizes the charges, made by Koepsell and Spoerhase, for instance, about what they call this 'knowledge transfer' from neuroscience to literature:

> …it is not clear yet why the neurons fire. We cannot draw any conclusions about their causes or their mechanisms. Studies on mirror neurons could therefore not explain how empathy is conveyed in literary texts; at the most, they are consistent with theories of empathy or imitation, respectively.[73]

The cognitive psychologist Stephen Pinker would also express skepticism that empathy as sympathetic concern can be explained by mirror neurons (or with neurological mimicry and contagion).[74] While 'the neuroscience investigation of mirror neurons and the study of mimesis in the humanities reveal surprising symmetries,' it is not clear what these symmetries mean, or which representative model may be mirroring the other.[75] The presentation of mirror neuron theory in the context of literature may also strike the literary reader as reductive, leaping all too quickly from empirical laboratory experiments to complex psychological observations, explaining, as Lauer argues, 'why we are able to cry for Anna Karenina.'[76] When asked whether 'it would be possible to extrapolate from MNM research a theory of storytelling... and, of course, mimesis,' Vittorio Gallese, the principal researcher of the 1996 article in *Brain* and a prolific advocate of mirror neuron theory, admits: 'I think the gap is really huge.'[77]

Massimo Salgaro, in addressing the skeptics, has argued that neuroscientific approaches need not work alone to explain literary phenomena, but can give detail and precision to phenomenological accounts of experience of reading such as those of Iser and Ingarden. Iser's response theory in particular, he claims, becomes 'clearer, more precise' with the help of

empirical research in mirror neuron studies.[78] Salgaro may be right that we can learn from neuroscientific approaches, but the literature as yet has not clear even what sort of clarity and precision is desired. The marking of physiological coordinates for particular cognitive activities such as visual imagining or empathetic reactivity could offer useful findings for brain researchers, but it is not clear that could ever help to make sense of the ideality (the imagined content and structure) of those activities in the case of literary imagining. The location, structure, and organic processes that make up the physiological substrate of such experiences, even if exhaustively known, would not explain the quality, potential meaning, and contextual relevance of those experiences.

We can draw from this research a strong suggestion that the imagination, even in literary mimesis, ought not be treated as if it were disembodied. The critique of a disembodied, Cartesian imagination has been known in phenomenology since the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and reaffirmed in work by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, but heretofore this has been underrepresented in phenomenologies of literary experience. [79]   In his now classic essays on Cézanne,[80] Merleau-Ponty showed that painterly mimesis should no longer be understood as a disembodied representation transferred onto the canvas.[81] Merleau-Ponty illustrates how the body is involved in what we take to be the representational act of painting, not least because the painter's body itself takes up space as objects do. He shows how painting expresses that correspondence between the painter's own physical body and the surrounding world. In rejecting the concept of mimesis as a third-order expression of a representation of the mind originally acquired from perception (as in the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*), Merleau-Ponty describes the 'overlapping' between seer and the world seen:

This extraordinary overlapping, which we never give enough thought to, forbids us to conceive of vision as an operation of thought that would set up before the mind a picture or representation of the world, a world of immanence and ideality. Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the see-er does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by looking, he opens onto the world.[82]

Just as vision and painting are understood as the activities of a thoroughly embodied consciousness, so too must language be understood as coinciding with perception and action. Gallese, teaming up with Lakoff, now concludes that because language makes use of the same neural structures as perception and action, neither semantics nor grammar is disembodied and 'merely' symbolic.[83] Jenson and Iacobini claim, accordingly, that since mimesis is grounded in physiological processes, it can no longer be regarded as merely cultural, remote from our biological nature. Representation is to be regarded as:

a fundamental human processing structure in our encounters with others. Representation is not what is external and secondary: it is physiological and developmental, and entangled with our sociality.[84]

Neurological research, while far from a phenomenological account of embodiment, underscores Merleau-Ponty's claims for the immersion of the imagining subject in the realities of embodiment, and extends them to language. In light of this convergence, it is all the more problematic that, as argued in the previous section, Iser's theory of literary imagining relies on an ideal 'implied' reader. The reader of literary works would have to be considered as more than just the potential realization of the literary text, for such a reader must also be thought in terms of a set of imaginative capacities, including those involved in perception, action, intersubjectivity and empathy, all of which are rooted in biological processes.[85] Readerly embodiment—the

physiological processes at the origins of a reader's experience—has also begun to surface in literary interpretation, particularly with interest in the phenomenon of literary immersion.

We can also relate embodied intentionality to Ricoeur's account of literary imagining through metaphor. Metaphor, which as an extension and restructuring of semantic fields, is paradigmatic in Ricoeur's theory for the productive imagination.[86] Metaphor is not solely linguistic, however, as Lakoff and Johnson have argued. Literary theory is beginning to respond to the view that metaphor as a linguistic capacity first arises through the experience of embodiment. Metaphor originates in an imaginative transfer of physical experiences to mental and social ones through the medium of language. Balance, uprightness, containment, surfaces and depths, and so forth are basic metaphors extended through language from the physical experience of the body in interaction with its surroundings to regions of human endeavour. Through such extension they become metaphors for the mind, the soul, morality, justice, and the like.[87] If as Ricoeur argues, metaphor allows for 'the insertion of the psychological into the semantic,' it also allows for the assertion of the physiological into the poetic.[88] Neuro-aesthetics would only then complement this indication of the embodied origins of a linguistic structure so central to literary experience.

The application of neuro-aesthetics to literature may offer some precision and clarification of the phenomenological model advanced by Iser, but risks reduction to the first and possibly second dimensions of mimesis. While our sense of a reader may be amplified by the requirement of embodiment, as I have suggested, the text becomes merely a catalogue or manual of potential operations, and most especially those that can be observed in a laboratory. The reader, now understood in his or her physical reality, is said to be 'browsing through the manual for future or possible actions.'[89]

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The anticipation and simulation of possible actions may well constitute some of the appeal of literary engagement, but this does not seem to account for the experience of immersion, including the aesthetic quality of a literary world, the imaginative contemplation it provokes, the 'reverberations' with our own memories its images ignite,[90] the aura of its place and time, the aesthetic and moral register of its orientation, and the perspective of narration it offers. Immersion in a literary text offers, in other words, a dimension of alternative being, an experience that takes on a significance of its own beyond its reflection of reality. This cannot be accounted for by the mimesis of specific actions or even the affective states of a given character. What is neglected in the neurological approach is a more holistic understanding of how one can experience immersion in a literary world, however underdetermined and interrupted by the vagaries of attention it may be. This sense of immersion cannot be accomplished by simulating action, or even affective empathy, without other more generalized aesthetic operations.

CONCLUSION

The notion of the mimetic dimension allows us to understand literature both in its reference to and its deviation from reality as we ordinarily know it. In the first section, Kafka's story 'A Report to an Academy' was mentioned as prototypical of the kind of literature exploiting the third dimension of mimesis—a representation that goes beyond reality as actual and as manifestly possible. In Kafka's story, the protagonist is an ape, specifically a chimpanzee, which has accelerated his evolutionary progression to the level of the average human through the use of imitation. Kafka's story may be re-read in the context of neurological studies of mirror neuron activity in its recent application to literature.

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Yet it is not only modernist literature that should be associated with the ideal mimetic dimension. The immersion in a fictive world cannot be explained by mimesis in the sense of representation of actuality, or even of possible manifestations of such. Don Quixote's imagining, and his confusion about the difference between the imaginary and the real, can be explained by showing the relationship among different mimetic dimensions in the text. Moreover, the richness of Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha* is owed to the complex interplay of these dimensions, building up for the reader a world that reflects not only the protagonist's place and time but the reader's own common capacity for imagining.

While neuroscience has not offered a basis for an explanation of literary mimesis except in the weakest sense, I argue, it shows that the notion of a merely 'implied' or 'ideal' reader of a literary text, which serves as the central concept of phenomenologically-grounded reader-response theories of literature, is insufficient. This also challenges Iser's displacement of the imaginary beyond the imaginative activities of a reader grounded in the actual world that serves as a basis for mimetic operations. Mimesis, in sum, should be understood in its most complex dimensionality as the capacity to transcend empirical reality in the creation of fictional worlds. Such a world is, like representation itself, ontologically ambiguous, in both relating features of reality as we ordinarily know it, and creating its own experiential specificity. But as a human capacity, literary imagining of such worlds is rooted in, and draws its resources from, our empirically embodied life. Any theory of literature has to be able to account both for transcendence of reality through its mimetic transformation, and for the roots of such activity in embodied human cognition.

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[1] By 'literary' reading I mean, at the least, the reading of poetic or fictional texts that do not require correspondence to reality for their value and in which we can become imaginatively absorbed.

[2] Immersion was the subject of a conference, 'Immersion in the Storyworld,' at St. John's College, Oxford, June 25-26, 2012. Speakers included Gerhard Lauer and Patrick Colm Hogan. See also Marie Laure-Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[3] Kendall Walton, in *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, relies on the notion of fictional worlds, or the collective fictional truths generated by representational pretense. See *Mimesis As Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 38. Hayot's recent account of a literary 'world' addresses aesthetic 'worldedness' as a relation between the world 'inside' and 'outside' the work. In contrast to these theories, I argue for the mimetic dimension in order to be able to account for the quality of reflectiveness in literary mimesis at two preliminary levels—the reflection of actual reality and of possible reality— before the third level at which we can refer to a literary 'world.' See Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[4] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a15. The translation here is by Stephen Halliwell, Aristotle, *Poetics*, Loeb Classical Library Vol XXIII (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Without making the same explicit distinctions, Plato, in *Republic*, considers the object or content of poetic imitations at length (especially in books II and III), but also discusses both medium, and mode of poetic imitations at 393c-394d and 395c. With respect to mode, Socrates differentiates between narration and acting or taking on the view of other characters (as in tragic and comic drama), and reserves a distinction between 'narrative' and 'imitation' in this latter sense: '…we must reach a decision whether we are to suffer our poets to narrate as imitators or in part as imitators and in part not, and what sort of things in each case, or not allow them to imitate at all…' (394d). Yet elsewhere, as throughout Book X, Socrates characterizes poiesis in general as imitative. See Plato, *Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

[5] For Auerbach the realist style is contrasted with the rhetorical tradition, the former initiated by Homer (for instance in *Odyssey*) and the latter by writers of the Old Testament. While in the style of realism all relevant events are foregrounded, in the rhetorical there may be indeterminate and contingent, unexpressed elements 'only suggested by silence and the fragmentary speeches,' while 'the whole is permeated with the most unrelieved suspense… remains mysterious and 'fraught with background.'" See Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), (11-12).

[6] We should keep in mind, of course, that realism as a genre and style of fiction involves a certain contrivance. While Auerbach and Jean-Paul Sartre praise realism as an unadulterated reflection of reality, this may be naïve, according to Terry Eagleton. On Eagleton's view, indebted to that of Henry James, realism represents the world in accord with our representations of real-worldly life. 'Realism is calculated contingency,' Eagleton argues. The most we can do is, as Henry James put it, render the world with an 'air of reality.' Eagleton complains about the overvaluation of realism, moreover: 'Isn't part of the point of art to give those tiresome restrictions the slip, creating

such things as the Gorgon or a grin without a cat, which do not exist in nature?' 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', *London Review of Books* 25:20 (2003).

[7] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 519.

[8] Aristotle continues: 'The difference between the historian and the poet is not that between using verse or prose … No, the difference is this: that the one relates actual events, the other the kinds of things that might occur. Consequently, poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars.' Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a35-1451b10.

[9] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b10.

[10] Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality,' *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), here 133.

[11] Here I disagree with Hayot's view of modernism as rejecting both the world as it is and the possibility of another. Rather, though modernism may be identified with breakdown of world-structure, it asserts the aesthetic work precisely as a world-granting fundament that needs little external verification.

[12] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 1978), 102.

[13] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). On an account of 'world' in this context see [citation withheld for submission].

[14] Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 134.

[15] Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, p. 38.

[16] See William H. Gass, *The World within the Word,* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) p. 308.

[17] Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, p. 30.

[18] Plato, *Republic,* 597a-d.

[19] Plato, *Republic*, 393c.

[20] Plato, *Republic*, 595b, 603b, 598b.

[21] Plato, *Republic*, 605a. Socrates compares the poet and the painter at 605a, and suggests that the critique of painting he has set forth is instrumental in settling the 'old quarrel between philosophy and poetry.' *Republic,* 607b.

[22] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b5.

[23] Gerhard Lauer, 'Spiegelneuronen. Über den Grund des Wohlgefallens an der Nachahmung,' in *Im Rücken der Kulturen*, ed. K. Eibl, K. Mellmann, R. Zymner (Paderborn, 2007). See also Lauer, 'Going Empirical: Why we Need Cognitive Literary Studies,' *Journal of Literary Theory* 3:1 (2009) 145-154. 'Das Spiel der Einbildungskraft. Zur kognitiven Modellierung von Nachahmung, Spiel, und Fiktion,' in *Literatur als Spiel. Evolutionsbiologische, ästhetische, und pädagogische Aspekte*, ed T. Anz and H. Kaulen (Berlin, New York, 2009) 27-37. Massimo Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual: Some Reflections on the Concept of Language from a Neuroaesthetic Perspective,' *Journal of Literary Theory* 3:1 (2009) 155-66.

[24] In his introduction to the fiftieth anniversary edition of Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Edward Said writes: 'From a contemporary standpoint, there is something impossibly naïve, if not outrageous, that hotly contested terms like 'Western,' 'reality,' and 'representation'—each of which has recently brought forth literally acres of disputatious prose among critics and philosophers—are left to stand on their own, unadorned and unqualified.' Said, from a post-colonial point of view, has taken up the notion of 'Western' in particular as it is posited over and against an implicit or explicit construction of the notion of the 'Eastern' or 'Oriental.' Yet the notion of reality as represented in literature is problematic in post-modernism in general.

[25] Auerbach criticizes, for instance, Virginia Woolf, just as Lukács rejected Musil and Joyce. See Terry Eagleton's critique of this preference for realism, and of the notion of realism itself, in his review 'Pork Chops and Pineapples,' *London Review of Books* 25:20 (23 Oct 2003). In *What is Literature?* Sartre rejects poetry in general, particularly surrealism and Dadaism, along with Picasso's poetic writings, as opaque and concerned rather with language than with the reality language can disclose. Sartre does seem to correct this view somewhat in his affirmation of Francophone writers and their transformative use of the French language in his preface to Black Orpheus, also published in *What is Literature? and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[26] Aristotle, *Poetics* ,1448b5.

[27] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451a30.

[28] Ricoeur invokes Aristotle's *Poetics* in his claim for the 'iconic augmentation' of poetic language: it does not retreat from reality but redescribes and thus reshapes it. 'It is in this way that we retrieve one of Aristotle's affirmations in the Poetics. Tragedy—which for him is poetry par excellence—is a mimesis of reality, but under the condition that the poet creates a new mythos of this reality.' Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 134.

[29] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449a6.

[30] Similarly, Lubomír Doležel rejects the theory of imitation by arguing that particular characters cannot be said to be an imitations of real persons or of types of persons, since the former do not exist for all characters and the latter are not specific enough to account for our sense of their individuality. See *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

[31] See Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[32] [Citation withheld for anonymity of submission to BJA].

[33] Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 134.

[34] Francis Sparshott in 'Imagination—the Very Idea,' argues that the imagination as a term captures a 'chance confluence of a variety of terminological maneuvers, derivations and distinctions, and special theories and techniques' and denies any commonality to its various uses (5-6, 4). *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48:1 (Winter, 1990), 1-8.

[35] Aristotle, *de Anima* iii 3, 428aa1-2. Aristotle specifies that the imagination is involved when the image is not due to perception.

[36] Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* §49; *Critique of Pure Reason* b151.

[37] Paul Harris, in *The Work of Imagination*, has described cognitive development and the capacity for counterfactual thinking as indebted to imagination.

[38] Sartre defeats the view prevalent in modern philosophy, that the image is a reborn sensation, by arguing that "the image is but a name for a certain way consciousness has of intending its object" (OSI, 113). See Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

[39] Sartre, unlike Heidegger, describes imagery in the context of philosophies of consciousness. Cognitive psychologists widely refer to mental imagery as the process of inner visualization that takes place in ordinary imagining as well as in literary reading. While some accounts of imagination (such as Gilbert Ryle's) reject any reference to mental imagery, focusing instead on propositional statements.

[40] Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion, and the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 317-335.

[41] William Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: David R. Godine, 1978).

[42] Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 129. As Margorie Greene has written, Sartre is, with respect to the image, fascinated with emptiness and nothingness to such an extent that he presents the "world of imagination as a dimensionless void." Margorie Greene, "The Aesthetic Dialogue of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, ed. Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith (Evanston, Il: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 216, 217. In contrast, see Merleau-Ponty's affirmation of Sartre's assignment of imagination as nothingness, which he enlists in attempting to overcome the representational model of consciousness. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'On Sartre's Imagination,' in *Texts and Dialogues*, ed. Hugh Silverman and James Barry Jr. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), 113.

[43] While Sartre does not allow this in the case of prose, he does seem to make an exception for poetry, where the imagery itself—not that which is disclosed through images—becomes the subject-matter of language, and thereby ceases to be able to disclose or illuminate reality. Sartre does not, however, see this autonomy of poetic language in a positive light, but rather as a rejection of reality. Yet poetry may shed light on aspects of reality precisely through the strangeness or unfamiliarity of its linguistic form. It highlights another view or version of the world. As Ricouer writes: 'Poetry, even more than painting, appears at first sight to be a retreat of language into itself, a pure and simple abolition of reality. But, what is denied by poetry is the ordinary vision of reality as it is described in ordinary language. This suspension is the condition for the emergence of new dimensions of experience and reality, exactly those which are redescribed by fiction.' Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 134.

[44] See George H. Taylor, 'Ricoeur's Philosophy of Imagination' *Journal of French Philosophy* 16:93, 2006.

[45] Ricoeur, *Lectures* 14:9, cited in Taylor, 97. (At the time of this writing the lectures remain unpublished. They are quoted at length in Taylor).

[46] Taylor, 99. For Ricoeur, a work's prophetic dimension, that it has something to say to us and bears meaning within itself, is due to its temporal configuration. It speaks to the present from the future, from the 'not yet.'

[47] Ricouer, *Lectures* 18:20.

[48] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,' in *Critical Inquiry* 5:1 (1978), 143-159, here 154-55; and *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2003), 196.

[49] Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process,' 164.

[50] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor,* 303.

[51] Kant defines the aesthetic idea as: "...diejenige Vorstellung der Einbildungskraft die viel zu denken veranlasst, ohne dass ihr doch irgendein bestimmter Gedanke, d.i. Begriff, adäquat sein kann, die folglich keine Sprache erreicht und verständlich machen kann." I am referring to the Meiner edition: Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1993), p. 168. Werner Pluhar's translation is: "a presentation of the imagination

which prompts much thought but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] concept, can be adequate," and which is therefore out of reach of language and is ineffable. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

[52] Ricoeur, *The Ricoeur Reader*, 148.

[53] Iser 1976, 60.

[54] Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 1, 234, 2, 3.

[55] Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, 2. Elizabeth Ströker questions this move, for being determinate is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for reality. See 'Was is das Imaginäre in Isers Fiktionalitätstheorie?' in *Funktionen des Fiktiven, Poetik und Hermeneutik 10*, ed. Dieter Henrich and Wolfgang Iser (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1983), 473-478.

[56] Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, p. 4.

[57] Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, 13.

[58] Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 128.

[59] Plato, *Republic*, 395c.

[60] Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, 230.

[61] To this question posed by Eliabeth Ströker, Iser's reply is not sufficiently helpful: 'The imaginary is not an isolated phenomenon which is available as itself and which can be determined as such.' Iser, 'Das Imaginäre: kein isolierbares Phänomen,' in Henrich and Iser, eds., 1983, 479-486, here p. 480.

[62] See Margit Sutrop, *Fiction and Imagination: The Anthropological Function of Literature* (Münster: Mentis Verlag, 2000).

[63] Massimo Salgaro, in section 2 of his essay 'The Text as Manual,' summarizes the problem of the merely 'implicit' reader in Iser's work. Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual. Some Reflections on the Concept of Language from a Neuroaesthetic Perspective,' *Journal of Literary Theory* 3:1 (2009).

[64] The regrettable fact that such studies require invasive surgical removal of a portion of the monkeys' skulls should be mentioned.

[65] Vittorio Gallese, Luciano Fadiga, Leonardo Fogassi, Giacomo Rizzolatti, 'Action Recognition in the Premotor Cortex,' *Brain* 119 (1996), 593-609.

[66] See Roy Mukamel, et al 2010 cited in Christian Keysers, Valeria Gazzola, 'Social Neuroscience: Mirror Neurons Recorded in Humans,' *Current Biology* 20:8 (April 2010).

[67] Gerhard Lauer, 'Spiegelneuronen. Über den Grund des Wohlgefallens an der Nachahmung,' in Im Rücken der Kulturen, et. Karl Eibl et al (Paderborn, 2007), 137-63. See also Andrea Pinotti, who defends a dialogue between neurosciences and aesthetics in the examination of conditions of perception. Andrea Pinotti, 'Neuroestetica, estetica psicologica, estetica fenomenologica: le ragioni di un dialogo,' *Rivista di Estetica* 37 (2008), 147–168.

[68] Lauer claims that 'even just talking about an action leads to a resonance of those nerve cells that would also fire if the same action was actually performed. Talked-about actions are thus spontaneously simulated in ourselves and in the process tested for their inner plausibility. That enables us to intuitively comprehend the utterances of others in mostly unconscious inferences and to create inner images from mere words. The system of mirror neurons in

connection with language allows us to ascribe consciousness and physical awareness to others similar to our own.' See Lauer, 'Spiegelneuronen,' 149-151.

[69] Salgaro points out that the mirror neuron activation has been observed in the process of reading: 'it is significant to note that experimental findings in the meantime have shown what Lauer suggested speculatively : Mirror neurons are active in the reading process. A research team around Lisa Aziz-Zadeh has documented the neuronal activity of readers who read sentences that describe hand or mouth movements. In both cases, the activity of mirror neurons could be observed … Discoveries in the neurosciences and neuro-linguistics force us to deviate from established reader models; the reader is now embodied.' Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual,' 157.

[70]In 'The Inner Sense of Action: Agency and Motor Representations,' Vittorio Gallese writes: 'Object observation, even within a behavioral context not specifically requiring an active interaction on the side of the observer, determines the activation of the motor program that would be required when the observer is actively interacting with the object. To observe objects is therefore equivalent to automatically evoking the most suitable motor program required to interact with them. Looking at objects means to unconsciously ›simulate‹ a potential action. In other words, the object-representation is transiently integrated with the action-simulation (the ongoing simulation of the potential action).' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7:10 (2000), 23-40, here 31. In 'The Inner Sense of Action,' Gallese explains that research in mirror neurons 'show[s] the impossibility of drawing a sharp line between acting and perceiving,' 28.

[71] Deborah Jenson and Marco Iacoboni , 'Literary Biomimesis: Mirror Neurons and the Ontological Priority of Representation *California Italian Studies* 2:1 (2011), 10-11.

[72] The case might be different with canonical neurons, since these are not imitative but expectational reactions to the surrounding environment. In this way canonical neurons might corroborate J.J. Gibson's affordance theory. See Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual,' 163. The idea is that canonical neurons underlie our capacity to use an object for this or that possible application. The affordance links the subject with objects through potential actions. Thus the imagination can be seen to have its basis in neural activity: object-recognition and potential action overlap in the neural basis of imagination.

[73] Salgaro, 155. See Kilien Koepsell and Carlos Spoerhase, 'Neuroscience and the Study of Literature: Some Thoughts on Knowledge Transfer,' *Journal of Literary Theory* 2:2 (2008). Gerhard Lauer's response to Koepsell and Spoerhase is offered throughout 'Going Empirical: Why We Need Cognitive Literary Studies,' *Journal of Literary Theory* 3:1 (2009), especially pages 146-148. See also Virginia Richter's reflections on the cognitive approach to literature and the interpretation of specific literary texts in, ''I cannot endure to read a line of poetry': The Text and the Empirical in Literary Studies,' *Journal of Literary Theory* 3:2 (2009), 375-388.

[74] See Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2009), especially the section 'Empathy' in chapter 9.

[75] Jenson and Iacoboni, 'Literary Biomimesis,' 13.

[76]Lauer, 'Going Empirical,' p. 147.

[77]Vittorio Gallese, 'The Mirror Neuron Mechanism and Literary Studies: An Interview with Vittorio Gallese,' *California Italian Studies*, 2:1 (2010).

[78] Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual,' 162.

[79] See Geoge Lakoff, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). The classic phenomenological account of embodied experience as the basis for all forms of thinking is Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge 2013).

[80] Both 'Cézanne's Doubt' and 'Eye and Mind' are reprinted in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader,* ed. Galen A. Johnson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

[81] Merleau-Ponty argues that the notion of mimesis, which had governed aesthetics in some manifestation or other from Plato until at least the end of the 19th century, is inadequate to account for the modern work of art. I would argue in this context that Merleau-Ponty's rejection of mimesis refers to mimesis in the first or actual dimension, and that a robust account of further mimetic dimensionality could accommodate Merleau-Ponty's understanding of perceptual expression.

[82] Merleau-Ponty, *Aesthetics Reader*, 124. Despite these suggestions, Merleau-Ponty does not ponder at sufficient length what might take place of the modern conception of the imagination, perhaps because his theory is focused on defending an alternative "metaphysics of vision" offered by painting; his purpose is to reconfigure our understanding of perception, and so he shies away from lingering too long within descriptions of consciousness and its threat of imprisoning vision within immanence.

[83] Gallese and Lakoff, 2005, 19.

[84] Jenson and Iacoboni, 'Literary Biomimesis,' 12.

[85] See Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual,' 161.

[86] See Ricoeur's summary of this in 'Imagination in Discourses and in Action,' *A Ricoeur Reader*, 172-173.

[87] Arnold H. Modell has also summarized research on the neurological basis of metaphor. See *Imagination and the Meaningful Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

[88] Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction,' 126.

[89] Salgaro, 'The Text as Manual,' 164.

[90] 'Reverberations' is a term used by Bachelard, borrowing from Eugene Minkowski, in *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Beacon Press, 1994), xiv.